

# BEST PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY TRADING

## JOINT REGIONAL AGREEMENT

### Discussion Guide, May 23, 2013

The following discussion guide was developed in response to discussion from the Joint Regional Agreement interagency workshop on April 9-10<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Union, WA. It is meant to serve as a starting point for the group, stimulating comments and discussion that will lead to refinement into a working communications strategy. Please review in preparation for the second interagency workshop, to be held on June 5-6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Troutdale, OR.

### Communications Plan

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The following summary was generated from discussions at the first interagency workshop.

Attendees discussed initial communication plans, and the balance between providing space for agency brainstorm/dialogue and keeping others informed/engaged. Attendees agreed that the Joint Regional Agreement (JRA) is a joint statement of the characteristics of a trading program that agencies believe would support credible and Clean Water Act-compliant water quality trades. Attendees agreed that the JRA is not a formal rulemaking or guidance promulgation. The attendees agreed that it will be essential for them to determine how to facilitate outreach, and will work with Willamette Partnership (WP) and The Freshwater Trust (TFT) to help make appropriate connections. The attendees committed to revising the external communication materials to better convey what the JRA is meant to accomplish.

#### **Communication Plan:**

To accomplish the communication goals articulated by the group, we suggest the following

#### **Revision to 2-page JRA project summary sheet**

Attendees agreed on the need to revise the JRA project summary 2-pager. Once agreed upon by all agency personnel, WP will post this document to its website. The respective agencies may also post this final document to their websites.

#### **Document Management and Sharing**

WP will post relevant JRA documents to its website to ensure external stakeholders can follow progress in an efficient and transparent way. Within three weeks following each workshop, WP will upload the following documents to its website: 1) workshop material packets; 2) workshop summaries/ action item lists; and 3) and other relevant documents. All other documents will be available upon written request to WP. In order to provide clarity to external stakeholders who may view different documents, post-Workshop #1 JRA-related documents will be appropriately dated, and labeled with one of the following naming conventions:

- *Discussion Drafts* – are preliminary discussion guides (described below), or sections of the preliminary guides, that may be distributed to participating agencies in advance of workshops for comments. WP and TFT draft these preliminary drafts based on surveys of best practices from around the country. These early draft iterations will be available on request, but will not be posted on the WP website. These documents will typically represent only the research conducted by WP and TFT staff and do not reflect agency positions.

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- *Discussion Guides* – include suggested definitions, context, analysis, and options for addressing various components of water quality trading programs (e.g. trading ratios, BMP quality standards), and pose discussion questions for the interagency workshops. These documents may reference other trading programs, examples, or documents, but are not intended to serve as published reports or white papers, and thus are not extensively cited. Discussion guides will be included in the workshop materials, which will be posted online following each workshop. In advance of Workshop #1, WP and TFT had not established naming conventions for the different iterations of documents, so some discussion guide documents were labeled as “Meeting Drafts.” This label has been replaced by the “Discussion Guide” label moving forward. These documents do not reflect agency positions.
- *Draft Best Practices* – articulate the perceived points of consensus on a given issue resulting from the feedback and commentary discussed at each inter-agency workshop. For each aspect of water quality trading discussed at the prior workshop, the Draft Best Practice document will include a “draft best practice,” a summary of commentary from the workshop, and a list of questions/issues requiring further follow-up. Workshop summary/action item lists will reference the more detailed information in the Draft Best Practice documents. These draft best practice documents will be distributed to agency partners for additional comments and, when acceptable to all parties, posted on the WP website. As edits are made to this document over time, new versions will be dated accordingly and subsequently posted online.

### State & Local Outreach:

In June/July of 2013, and then again in December of 2013, WP will host a JRA open house in each state. The invitation list for open houses will include stakeholders and interested parties such as industry, state and federal government (including agencies focused on non-water resources), conservation groups, environmental groups, agricultural/landowner groups, wastewater utilities, tribes, the governor’s office, academics, funders and corporate interests. WP will work with states to compile invite lists. The open house events will likely be scheduled for two-hour blocks and will be facilitated by WP, the NRCS CIG grant recipient and lead process facilitator.

If key external stakeholders do not attend the open houses, WP may offer individualized engagement upon request.

While being cognizant not to give preference to one party over another, it may be appropriate to engage specific groups.

### National Outreach:

National outreach will primarily occur through two avenues, in addition to informal conversations: 1) The Wingspread Convenings in May and October 2013; and 2) the expected National Network summer webinar. The purpose of these national conversations is to create a

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venue to share lessons, challenges, and best practices across some of the trading programs active or in development across the country.

### **Next Steps:**

- WP/TFT will send “Discussion Drafts” to agencies, receive feedback and revise accordingly as a workshop “Discussion Guides.”
- Assuming agreement on the open house concept, WP will work with the respective agencies to lock in dates/locations, preferably leveraging other state travel/water gatherings.
- This communication strategy will be formally discussed on the first day of Workshop II.
- WP will work with states, should they desire, to help develop state-specific communication strategies to complement this communications plan.